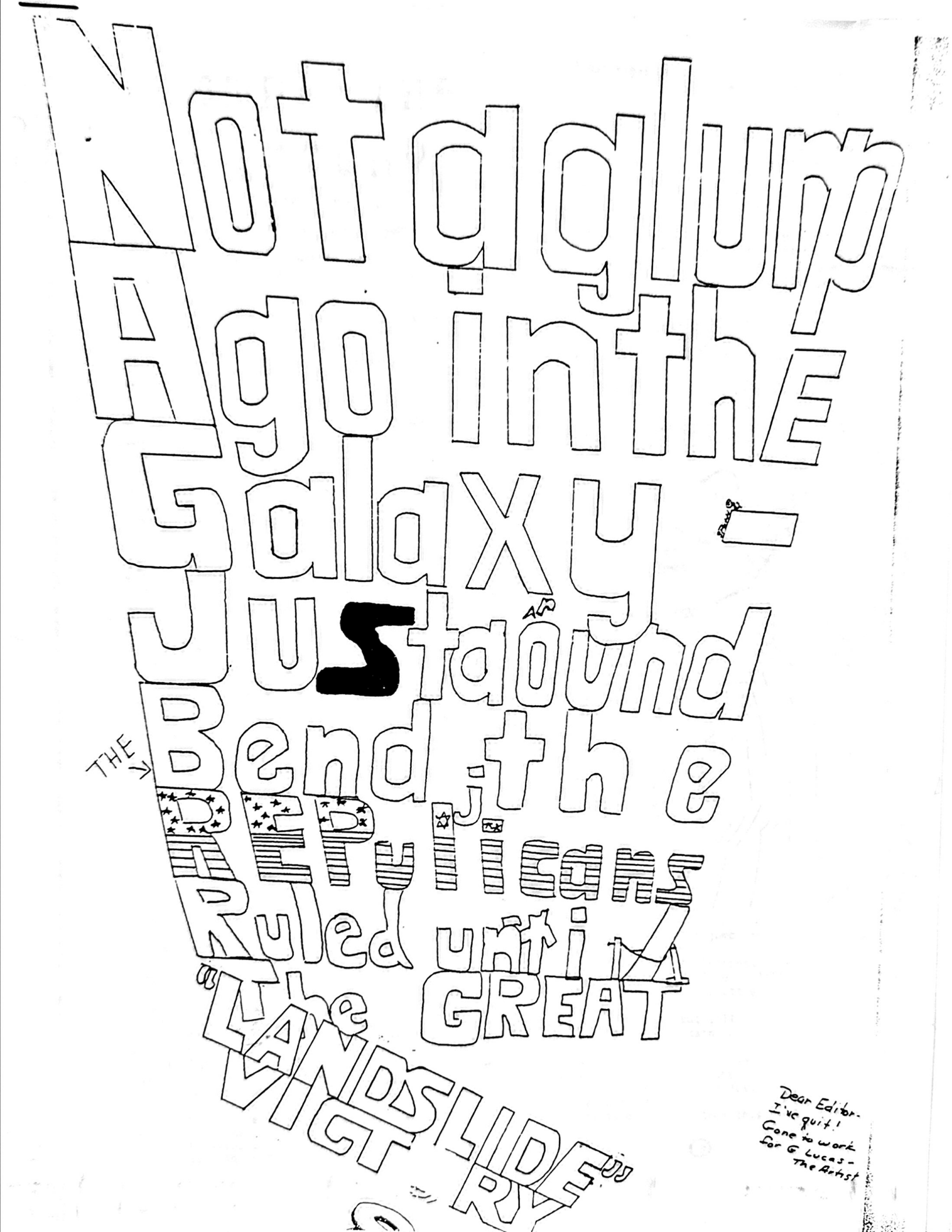

Not a glump
A go in the
Galaxy -
Just a sound
Bend the
THE
REPUBLICANS
Ruled until
The GREAT
"LANDSLIDE"
VICTORY
Dear Editor-
I've quit!
Gone to work
for G Lucas -
The Artist

# LANDSLIDE VICTORY

BY CARL S. MILSTED

ILLUSTRATED BY GENNIE SUMMERS

Forty years ago, all was at peace. The center of the galaxy was ruled by a wise and benevolent republic. All was good. Wise laws were passed. Justice was enforced by the clones of gene strains 489 a through f who had the ability to see using the fourth dimension and had telepathic powers capable of temporarily controlling those of weak mind. In the later years of the Republic these great men were often referred to as the BugEyed Knights because of their incredible visionary powers.

The peace and justice was then to come to an end. A master geneticist, Jom Qualrian, succeeded in cloning a creature with the intelligence of a great general and the body of a Mycothrovian dimothron, a large semi-intelligent creature with four legs, two large arms with claws for fighting, four tentacles for delicate work, and a tremendous appetite.

The result was Minthros, a creature totally immune to the powers of the BugEyed Knights. With a large work force of humans and dimothrons he built the first dynoship, a weapon so powerful that none of the Republic's ships could withstand it. In two years, Jom had overthrown the Republic and established himself as Emperor. Over the years Minthros searched out and ate the remaining BugEyed Knights, and Jom had two more dynoships built and put them under the commands of the two dimothron clones, Patrimos and Xenophilus.

Now, forty years later, it was up to Princess Adora Organic and her band of Republicans to attempt to restore the Old Republic.

Princess Adora Organic paced the floor of her ship for what seemed to be the millionth time. The small cruiser made for top priority personnel was run by a crew of only fifty. The ship was at an inclined orbit in System 453-a (Empire Catalog). The only habitable planet in the system was Makal V, a planet of very ill repute, no place to be for a respectable Princess.

The captain of the ship sat in his chair casually munching Cassadorian pseudopods. "Tell me, Your Highness," he asked. "Why are we going to this filthy planet?"

"I...I have a friend there, one that I must meet alone."

"There goes your reputation."

"How dare you!"

"Very carefully, Your Majesty," he replied, cringing. "I wish to point out that our revolution is not doing very well in the polls. If your reputation gets worse, we may lose our hard-earned title of 'Most Popular Revolution'."

"You have a point there, captain, but you needn't worry. The man I seek is a great soldier from the Old Republic. He is one of the last of a line of the bravest men to roam this galaxy."

"You mean an inner-city school teacher?" asked the captain with awe.

"Not quite. He is one of the last men who can claim to be cloned from gene strain #489-f. He can see fourth dimensionally. He is one of the last of the BugEyed Knights."

"That might just lift our people's morale if the legends of their thought control powers are true. I thought that all the BugEyed Knights who survived the bombs were eaten by Minthros."

"Sir Manfred, the one I seek, was being trained on a planet outside the limits of the Empire when Minthros was gorging himself. He finished the training too late to do much good so now he resides in the city of Telopolis on Makal V. Exactly where I don't know. It took the lives of seventy of our best men to find out that much."

"Captain, look here!" cried the navigator. "We've been followed! A Dynoship is coming out of the fourth dimension at a distance of seventeen megatreks. Estimated arrival time is twenty-three glurps."

"Prepare for 4-space jump immediately," ordered the captain.

"No!" exclaimed the Princess. "Head at all possible speed for the planet. I'll dive into the atmosphere in one of the shuttles. Then you can make the jump."

That's dangerous but I'll try. Xeno, prepare the shuttle." The captain quickly munched on another pseudopod. "Full acceleration in one glurp. After we drop you off we'll use star 453-a's gravity to align us for the next jump. If they don't catch us we will regroup with the rest of our third fleet after we lose them."

"Make sure you lose them this time," cautioned Adora.

AC-316 (George) was just coming "home" from the harvesting operation in Mendal Sea. He was one of the 800 children and adolescents who lived at the Mendal Home for Misplaced and Defective Clones on Makal V. Many of the planets had paid homes such as Mendal to rehabilitate or punish unwanted products of their civilizations such as criminals, orphans, and defective clones. The masters of Makal V had prospered under the Republic when humane punishment was the rule, but ever since the Empire brought the death penalty to its full potential, business had been getting bad for Makal V.

AC-316 and his partner GE-348's job was to harvest the leaves of the scarskelp that were on the surface of the water. The Mendal Home was getting short of hands to harvest the kelp so AC-316 and GE-348 had to work for 9 standards a day for the last few days.

"Are you still planning to go to the spacial academy?" asked GE-348 (Damon).

"Sure."

"Which revolution do you plan to defect to after you finish training, or are you planning to actually fight for the Empire?"

"You know that I can't fight for the Empire," answered AC-316 (George). "They haven't been able to balance the budget in thirty-seven years! I have yet to decide which revolution, but Sir Manfred says I should try to bring about the return of the Old Republic. It's really weird, he didn't say register Republican like anyone else would have said, but instead he said that I should 'bring about the return of the Republic,' as if I could do it myself!"

"Why do you hang around with that old drunk anyway?" asked GE-348 (Damon).

"I'm not sure. I've known him ever since I can remember. It's a certain kinship. If I didn't know better I'd say he knows what I was actually synthesized to do. Then, I would no longer be classified as a misplaced clone."

"Don't count on it. Besides, what if you were synthesized to collect garbage or the like? It might be a blessing that you were misplaced. Now you have a choice. At least in time."

"What do you mean, 'in time'! I'm scheduled to leave for the spacial academy in 27 days."

"You didn't hear the news? Because of the labor shortage in the homes they have raised the legal adulthood age for clones and orphans up a year."

"They can't do that!" cried George.

"The Emperor has already approved it."

"So that's why those ships came in an hour ago: to enforce that rule."

"What are you talking about? No Imperial ships are scheduled to come in today, and I've been with you all day. There is no way that you could've detected any ships. At least make your stories more plausible; why would the Empire send ships to this miserable rock?"

"In a vision I saw the ships. I have been having such visions for the last forty days or so. An hour ago I saw two ships come in out of 4-space. One of them was huge, possibly a Mycothrovian Dynoship."

"Come now, there are only three Mycothrovian Dynoships in the galaxy. The Emperor wouldn't send one of his best ships to this planet. You're dreaming. Next thing you'll be telling me is that Minthros the Muncher himself is commanding one of those ships."

"Then I won't tell you that much then. Can you punch in my name for me? I want to go into the city tonight."

"I don't know. In your condition you might be mugged or something."

"Come off it!"

"All right, this time. Tomorrow, however, you punch in for me for a change. Maybe a good barroom brawl will clear your head. You could use something after finding out about not being able to go to the academy this year."

"Thanks."

The two youths soon arrived at the shore. After unloading their harvest, an angry and confused AC-316 headed into the city of Telopolis.

Minthros growled as he watched the small cruiser head for Makal V. Why would the Princess want to go to Makal V? It didn't make sense and that irritated him immeasurably. Unless they thought they could find help on Makal V, the logical thing for them to do would have been to go into 4-space before the Dynoship I could get within range. I'll have to have the planet searched. This could be the site of the Republican Convention! The other odd thing that he couldn't figure out was why the Republicans were led by a Princess. "Man the battle stations!" he roared to his second in command. "This must be some type of trick! It looks too easy."

The small cruiser whipped by the planet in a trajectory that would take them into the star. "They're trying to block our sensors with solar radiation as they enter 4-space!" shouted Minthros. "Double our acceleration. We must be within close range when they make their jump into the fourth dimension."

On a lower deck of the dynoship, a lowly crewman noted a small snuttle entering the atmosphere of Makal V. He then promptly filled out observation report #674-j to be reviewed by the defense auditors when it came time to review the space budget.

AC-316 was nearing the alley where he always found Sir Manfred when he heard a scream not far away. Actually, hearing a scream in this part of Telopolis wasn't unusual at dusk, but AC-316 felt like some excitement, so he headed for the scream. He found the most beautiful woman he had ever seen confronted by four green residents who were shouting, "There goes the neighborhood!"

AC-316 had dispatched two of the assailants before the others knew what was happening. Whatever it was made for, it had to be something that required speed, he thougnt while fighting. For AC-316 had yet to find his match in a brawl.

After he took care of the other two, the woman asked, "Do you by any chance know where Sir Manfred lives?"

"Why would a nice girl like you look for a bum like him?"

"Bum! Sir Manfred is a great warrior. And I am the Princess Adora Organic, one of the main leaders of the Republican forces."

"Now everyone else in the neighborhood knows. Good thing none of them are law abiding citizens, or else the Emperor might find out also.

"It's quite a coincidence, actually; however, I was just heading for Sir Manfred's alley when I heard you scream."

"You mean he really is a bum?"

"A true alcoholic."

They arrived to find Sir Manfred drunk as usual. Said George: "I have brought a guest to your fair nome."

"She's certainly down my alley!" declared Sir Manfred.

"Sir Manfred," began the Princess. "I do believe ne nas passed out. Is this some kind of a joke? Who is he? For that matter, who are you?"

"You needn't be angry. He's showing you a great courtesy. For one, I am AC-316, a misplaced clone. Most people call me George. Secondly, he is Sir Manfred. He is in a trance to burn out the alcohol in his system. He only does that on very special occasions so feel honored. Now I ask you: do you know how he got the title of 'Sir'?"

"All in good time," said Sir Manfred, totally sober. He then pointed a finger at the wall, and a door appeared from nowhere. "Come, this is not the place to receive a princess."

They entered the reception room of a middle class residence. Sir Manfred disappeared and reappeared two glurps later, clean, well dressed, and shaved. "Princess, this supposed misplaced clone that you see nere is actually a clone from gene strain #489-c. It is time for him to become a BugEyed Knight."

"Wow!"

As they headed for the planet chasing the small cruiser, Minthros decided he wanted a change of taste. "What interesting comestibles are grown on that pitiful planet?" he roared to his personal staff.

"Makal V's only interesting native cuisine is an aquatic vegetable called scarskelp," replied the third chef.

"I shall have either of two things for lunch: two platters of this scarskelp, or YOU! Understand?"

"Yes, my lord."

The chef then notified the executive branch of Makal V that if they didn't have a magnetic cannister with 500 kilos of scarskelp in orbit within fifteen minutes, they could expect a few anti-matter bombs to hit selected targets. He had his threat backed up by the fact that he had already filled out the necessary environmental impact statements on blowing up cities.

As the Mycothrovian dynoship zipped by the planet at .113 light speed, the port magnetic grapple fields turned up to an intensity that could only be delivered by a dynoship. The cannister was immediately sucked into airlock 34 and rushed to Minthros' special kitchen.

This operation can be found in the dynoship command manual as procedure #458-DDW, otherwise known as the fast food pick-up.

Inside his house Sir Manfred explained, "A Bug-Eyed Knight has two primary weapons, George. The first is the deadly BugEyed knife. It is virtually indestructible; this one is three hundred years old. The edge consists of a super-heated plasma. Your worst enemies will literally melt away at its awesome power! It cuts through the hardest steel! It even juliennes potatoes! I now present to you this knife to be used in service to the Republic. Wield it well."

"Are these things still built?" asked George.

"Only on the few planets where quality never goes out of style."

"What is the other weapon?"

"It is the ability to see using the fourth dimension. You shall begin the training in that area soon enough. Only then can you realize its awesome power. Now, Princess, how can we serve you?"

"Our revolution is crumbling. Minthros and his three dynoships cannot be destroyed by our present weaponry. Our leadership cannot stand up to tne psychoengineering of the Emperor's propaganda ministers. What are we to do?"

"I have already considered these difficulties. First, I shall nave to confront Minthros myself. If I fail, then it will be up to George to destroy Minthros. As to the couteraction of the Emperor's propaganda, we need a creature capable of the utmost in leadership, a master of deception, one who has no respect for the truth whatsoever, a creature capable of making the masses believe utter nonsense!"

"What kind of creature is that?" queried a shocked Adora.

"A U. S. Senator."

"Where do Senators grow?"

"On a planet called Earth. While I was too young to fight, my guardians kept me on planets outside of the Empire, part way out on the rim of the galaxy. One of those planets was Earth."

"Was the scarskelp to your satisfaction, my lord?" asked the third chef.

"Not really," replied Minthros. "As a matter of fact, it has inspired a new torture device."

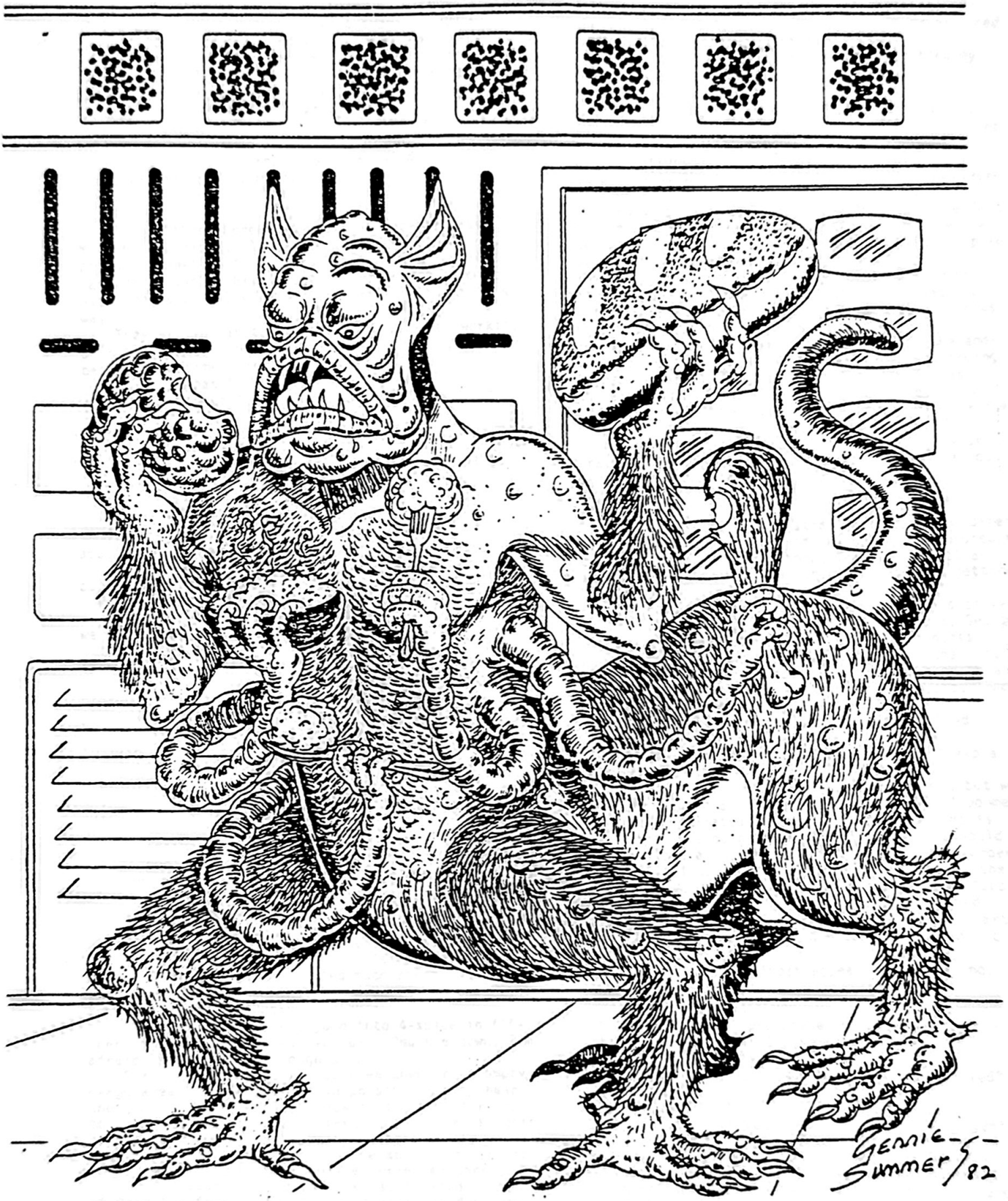
"What may that be?"

"The Scarskelp Diet. How many times have they gone into 4-space since Makal V?"

"Fifteen, sir. It appears that they are about to go into 4-space again. May I add that they appear to be going nowhere? They could keep us out of action for months at this rate."

"The Empire has two other dynoships; we can afford the wait on the mere chance that we may find the Republican base."

The dynoship is the only ship that the Emperor has that the various revolutions have no means of destroying. The three dynoships are commanded each by a Mycothrovian dimothron: Minthros, Xenophilus, and Patrimos. Each ship also has the following personnel in order of rank: 1 Master chef, 3 admirals, 35 commanders, 2 assistant chefs, 45 captains, 103 lieutenants, 916 robots, 3346 Marines, 630 psychologists, 471 pilots and astrogators, 613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technicians, 432 cooks, 117 sewage workers, 2345 assorted bureaucrats working directly for the Emperor, and 73 reporters.

The dynoship is nearly cylindrical with a length of 1.2 zeons and a radius of an average of 387 millizeons. Its arsenal includes such deadly weapons as anti-matter bombs, fusion bombs, fission bombs, lasers, particle beam weapons, weather disrupters, and foul language. To be able to traverse such long distances without stopping at a military installation, the versatile dynoship is capable of running a variety of fuels such as anti-matter, hydrogen fusion, plutonium, uranium, stellar wind and environmental impact statements.

As the three heroes neared the spaceport, Sir Manfred explained, "There are very few good pilots on this planet, but I do know of one pilot who has made many flights beyond the borders of the Empire. His name is Stal Syndrum. His hangar is right this way."

They arrived in the hangar to find a man working on a small starship called Treble. "Manfed, it's been a long time, hasn't it?"

"Yes, it has."

"What far out literature would you like to be the author of?"

"What do you mean?" queried Adora.

"I review the literature of planets that are not under Empire copyright jurisdiction and sell it to authors who have run out of ideas."

"Have you ever smuggled in literature from a planet called Earth?" asked George.

"Sure," replied Syndrum. "That's where I acquired the famous classics: *Hamlet* and *Bugs Bunny*."

"They must be brilliant!" gasped Adora. "Anyone capable of deceiving them would be able to lead our revolution despite the best Empire propaganda!"

"Precisely," answered Sir Manfred. "Now, Stal, we would like transportation to this planet, Earth."

"Just what do I get? Literature pays a lot more than passengers."

"We are priority soldiers of the Old Republic," stated Adora. "We can pay you a very large sum if you take us to Earth and then to our base."

"Well great," beamed Syndrum, "I always did want to live like a Republican. Come on in my ship."

After they entered the ship, Syndrum pointed to a printout desk and explained, "This is Treble, an organic translator unit. No computer could translate like the mass of protoplasm that is hooked up to this ship."

"Greetings," boomed a deep voice from an indeterminate position.

"He's also hooked up to the intercom and the rest of the ship. He's great company on long voyages."

The small ship had reached a safe distance from 453-a in three days. To go much faster would have wasted much fuel and attracted much attention. In this time Sir Manfred instructed George on the fighting methods of the BugEyed Knights.

"We'll make the first jump into 4-space in fifteen minutes," announced Syndrum. "Buckle down, I'm afraid Treble makes a rough jump."

Sir Manfred and George buckled down in an empty cargo area where nobody could possibly see or hear them, except for Treble. "Now is the time for you to gain the awareness that makes the BugEyed Knights special. I know you are ready because of the visions you have had. Your mind has the ability to see in four dimensions, but has only experienced three; therefore, your ability is somewhat limited. When we make the fourth dimensional transition from one three dimensional plane to another, you will learn the first step of how to guide your mind fourth dimensionally. With this ability, no object can impede your vision. Distance will hardly be a factor in your ability to see with your mind's eye. It will be as if you could see through anything! By the time you get to Earth, you will have experienced the sight of the BugEyed Knights."

"In other words this trip is going to blow my mind," observed George.

"Precisely."

The good ship, Treble, then proceeded to make the jump into the fourth dimension. Stresses pulled at the passengers at random directions. Everything became distorted. Only Treble and the clones of gene strains 489 f and c managed to keep from blacking out.

George's awareness took a quantum leap. He felt his being soar through the cosmos. Any barrier he could see around fourth dimensionally. Visions piled upon visions until he could no longer take it all in. The voice of Sir Manfred calmly reassured him through it all, "See what the rest of humanity misses. Do not lose yourself. You can focus your mind. Focus your awareness on what you wish to see..."

George's mind gradually retreated from the endless cosmos. He was again in the ship. Continuing to use his ability to see through that which is three dimensional, he focussed his awareness upon the unconscious Princess Adora. "Wow!" cried George. "I see why they call us BugEyed Knights now!"

"George!" reprimanded Sir Manfred, "take your training seriously. Remember that we play the most dangerous game in the universe!"

"What is that?"

"Basebomb."

Thus, George was initiated into the fourth dimensional powers of the BugEyed Knights. This procedure can be found in the Knighthood Training Manual as Initiation Procedure 3-w, otherwise known as getting spaced out.

The heroes awoke to the aroma of Treble's cooking. Because he was accustomed to scarskelp, George was enjoying the meal thoroughly while Princess Adora wished for the day she would be off the ship and its preconstituted meals. George pointed to a gel-like substance in the middle of his plate. "Mmmm, this is good. What is it?"

"Fortified hydro-cat concentrate," replied Syndrum.

"Tastes like it was made from scratch," explained George.

"I hate to interrupt you from your meal, but we are approaching a large group of asteroids," boomed Treble. "Estimated arrival time to asteroids is exactly twelve point three seven glurps. I would suggest that a course correction would be in order."

They all peered out the front viewport as the ship hurtled toward the group of asteroids. "Looks like trouble," began Syndrum. "I had expected asteroids in this vicinity but much farther apart."

"It doesn't look like a natural formation to me either," added George.

"The asteroids almost appear to be dancing!" exclaimed Adora.

"I'm afraid what you are calling dancing asteroids are actually prototypes of one of the Empire's latest weapons that I have heard rumors about," explained Sir Manfred.

"New Empire weapons? What are they called?" asked Adora.

"Rockettes."

Syndrum directed Treble on a course tangent to the rockettes. Sir Manfred reported, "We have more to worry about than these rockettes. I see with my mind's eye Dynoship III coming in our direction from behind one of the asteroids. The logical course of action is to surrender and be boarded."

"And you call yourself a knight!" roared Adora.

"May I remind you that my knife is of no use

unless I get inside that ship? You and George are precious cargo; they won't shoot us out of the sky. They will bring us in with their magnetic grapple. Once inside, I'll create diversions and handle Patrimos. While I'm doing that, you all follow George as he cuts his way through the ship with his BugEyed knife. You are to destroy this ship."

"How are we to do that?" asked the pilot.

"George's knife is capable of cutting through any of the Dynoship's bulkheads. The Dynoship's main nuclear reactors have a high percentage of plutonium to cut down on weight. You two destroy the cooling systems to any of these reactors. The reactor will heat up, melt down, go supercritical, and blow the Dynoship to China, Syndrum!"

The Dynoship III soon appeared on the screen. Sir Manfred took George to a back room to give him his last instructions. "Do you recall how I said we played the most dangerous game?"

"Basebomb."

"Precisely," continued Manfred. "You see the Empire has three Dynoship class bombers whose purpose is to destroy the Republican base. Our job is to destroy these bombers to save our base. The second thing is this: I have implanted inside myself a bomb that will go off in case I am killed by Patrimos. If I give him a good fight but he wins, his primitive instincts will take over and he will consume me. So even if I lose, I'll be able to give him a case of indigestion he'll never forget.

"If I don't survive, you'll have to have someone else train you for you have yet to gain the ability to see in the fourth dimension without the help of the 4-space drive. To be able to do this you must learn to be able to master a type of self hypnosis. On the highest mountain of Earth lives Zen Master number 34 who can teach you this art."

"Is that his Imperial designation number?"

"No, his shoe size."

Patrimos had received Minthros' order to monitor all ships leaving Makal V. It had paid off. Although the smugglers' craft had managed an unusually long jump, Patrimos' Dynoship had tracked it down and entered three-space at a closer point to the sun. This gave him time to deploy the rockettes.

It looked like he would be able to stop the Republicans once and for all. Adora must be trying to get to the base. This system seemed to be a likely place. Patrimos decided to capture Adora just in case the base wasn't located in the Solar System. It was nice. He could capture Adora, destroy the base and get control of a larger part of the fleet under his command; after all, Minthros was getting old. He resolved not to report his position until this operation was over. He didn't want anyone coming to steal the credit.

It all worked out except for one detail: Minthros' spies had reported that Adora was accompanied by a bum later identified as one who called himself Sir Manfred and a displaced clone called George. The situation smelled in more ways than one. If this Sir Manfred happened to be a BugEyed Knight, then it would be too dangerous to take them as prisoners. However, if the clone was an untrained BugEye squire, then he could be made to work for the Empire, a worthy benefit indeed, even if Patrimos wasn't capable of finding the base.

Soon after the small ship was captured, the intercom of the Dynoship III rang out with the ancient cry of "Intruder alert in the Fourth Quadrant!"

For Patrimos that decided it; Manfred was a BugEyed Knight. No one else could have escaped. Patrimos took his plasma sword and headed for the fourth quadrant. No human, not even a BugEyed Knight, could match Patrimos. Or so he thought.

Sir Manfred used his mental powers to set off enough imaginary crises and rumors to keep most of the ship occupied. He then telepathically gave George his final instructions. Sir Manfred was then ready for his last battle.

Patrimos came in through the expected entrance to the corridor. Sir Manfred prepared to give Patrimos at least enough of a battle to make Patrimos work up an appetite.

Sir Manfred set his knife on Dice. The two opponents clashed. The suspense-filled battle lasted four glurps before Patrimos made the fatal stroke that knocked Manfred's knife out of his grasp.

"Face it, Manfred; you've lost!" gloated Patrimos. "With Adora, I can find the Republican base and destroy it. In return for saving Adora's life, I can make an ally of your squire. Your cause is lost! Any last words before I take my fill?"

"I only regret that I have but 100,000 calories to serve for my party."

Patrimos' teeth made quick work of Manfred's corpse. He sat back and prepared for that satisfying burp of relief.

No greater burp was ever belched.

Future philosophers would note from this event that "He who masticates, is lost."

Syndrum and Adora hurried to keep up with the

bold squire. The lad certainly knows where he's going, thought Syndrum. The crew members paid little attention to the three intrepid heroes as they headed towa d the main fission reactor. They entered the main control room of the reactor without even a glance at Adora.

"Okay, Syndrum, you're the expert at blowing up nuclear reactors; what do we do now? Sir Manfred has engaged in battle with Patrimos. If Patrimos wins, these people are going to come out of their trance, and I don't have the power to do anything about it."

"If I can get control of that panel -- "

Suddenly the men working the reactor noticed the heroes. "Sir Manfred is dead!" croaked George.

The head technician demanded, "What are you doing near this reactor!"

"We're environmentalists," declared Adora boldly.

While they were talking, George hurriedly sliced and diced the control panel marked "Reactor Cooling System." Examining the situation, the technologists quickly ran to their offices to fill out the 45-w forms necessary to request armed guards. This was not necessary because alarms began to ring loudly and the voices of guards could already be heard in the hallway. "Follow me!" yelled George as he julienned his way through the wall.

The three ran through the hole and followed George as he carved his way through several bulkheads before deciding upon a safe enough corridor to run through. Meanwhile, several dozen guards stormed into the room and nearly followed them through the hole, but the leader yelled, "Halt! Let me check and see if the next room's radiation level is within Imperial safety regulations."

The three heroes safely made it back to their ship and escaped. Treble's main screens flashed brilliantly as the dynoship dramatically exploded.

"What now?" whispered a shaken princess.

"A Senator we must catch," boomed Treble.

Treble slowly cruised over India on the way to the Himalaya mountains. They had been on Earth for nearly half a year in which George had spent the time learning from his Zen master while Adora and Syndrum bent upon the impossible task of trying to understand American politics. The recently acquired Senator was hooked up to Treble so he could learn the official language of the Empire.

Syndrum mused upon the hypnotised Senator, "I really don't see how he can do much good. Even after we cure his bad heart and back as I told him we would do in exchange for his help, he still won't be the physical specimen that either Sir Manfred was or George is. As for mental abilities, I have yet to detect the beginnings of logic in his speech."

"I'm more worried about George," moaned Adora. "Those Zen masters looked a bit weird to me. Also, they have no knowledge of the 4-space drive, and I rather doubt that they know about the fourth dimension at all! How could they teach George anything? I hope they don't make George just like them. As for our passenger, Sir Manfred said that the reason for getting a U. S. Senator was because they are capable of making the masses believe utter nonsense which is the primary criterion of leadership. Considering the conditions of the United States, I don't think we have to worry about our Senator lacking this power."

"To change the subject," said Syndrum, "I hope we can divert our energies to saving the snail darter from Tellico dam as soon as this revolution is over."

George informed his Zen master, "It shall be soon now that I will have to return to the stars. Is there anything of major importance that I have to learn before I leave your sanctuary?"

"Only this," replied the master, "you can't leave your body for too long before your body will need your soul again."

"No," objected George, "I intend to take my body with me. My friends should return today to take me back so I can fight against an empire that is innumerable times larger than that of Ghengis Khan's. It spreads over hundreds of worlds both larger and smaller than your own. They have machines capable of wiping out all the life on this planet in minutes. They may eventually do that unless they decide to enslave you first. They might even come here and repeal the minimum wage!"

"In that case remember to use your powers always to seek out the truth. The martial arts I have taught you are more intended to make it so you kill less than kill more. With the ability to disable your opponent by hitting the proper nerves you can safely render him helpless without killing him."

"I shall try, Master."

As they were speaking Treble appeared over the horizon and soon landed a hundred yards away. Syndrum and Adora stepped out and ran towards them. "We have the Senator!" yelled Syndrum.

"He has the powers that Sir Manfred described," added Adora.

George looked at them with the calm indifference of one who has achieved Nirvana and replied softly, "I know."

This shocked Adora to no end so she flung her-

self into his arms and kissed him. She looked into his eyes and said with relief, "Your eyes still bulge. I thought you had become a zombie like your Zen master for a second.

"Zombie?" queried George and pointed to the master; for his eyes bulged, too. "It is just that we have achieved an inner tranquility, much like that of a stagnant pond."

"I see."

"Let's go," said George. Then to the Zen master, "Until we live again."

Syndrum and Treble took them silently into orbit. "We must act soon," began Syndrum.

"The news reports a record Imperial budget deficit," added Treble.

"All the Republican forces have had to retreat to the main base," cried Adora.

"We must set a course for Teral VII," explained George. "The Dynoship II is presently docked there. I must figure on how I can stop Xenophilus."

"How do you plan to do that?"

"I don't know yet, but I realize that we made a mistake in destroying Patrimos' Dynoship III."

"Why is that?" asked Treble incredulously.

"The Emperor's men purposely made Patrimos and Xenophilus inferior to Minthros so they wouldn't try overthrowing him. Patrimos was the least powerful of the three. Our best chance would have been to take over the Dynoship III to be used against the other two. Only with a dynoship does the Republican cause have a chance against the Empire. I have yet to think of a way to accomplish this. Do you have any ideas?"

"Yes," replied Treble. "In my storage area is a vial of Tthgarian brain mite spores. Exposure instantly renders one unconscious for a period of around 97 glurps. If you could release the spores in the main air channels of the dynoship, you could render unconscious everyone in the ship except the main computer and Xenophilus."

"It might work," said George.

Syndrum produced the vaccine for Tthgarian brain mites and proceeded with the necessary inoculations.

Minthros disgustedly finished off a small fifth-wing radical group in the third quadrant of the Empire. Ever since Patrimos was destroyed, he had been forced to go on routine missions such as this one. To think of the nerve of Patrimos, thought Minthros. He had refused to give his position before dealing with Adora so no one could come to his aid and take some of the credit. He thought just because I, Minthros the Muncher, had destroyed most of the BugEyed Knights that he could do the same with the BugEyed Knight who had accompanied Adora.

His reverie was interrupted by a presence. A BugEyed Knight is scanning the heavens, thought Minthros. So they move at last! I shall get their base finally! Minthros took the approximate position of the knight and prepared a new search. He could not tell exactly where the knight was, but it was in an area where there were few star systems to search in.

They had been on Teral VII for three days without thinking of a way to get inside Dynoship II. An intense boredom had hit the heroes. Even Treble was forced to sleep when the Senator spoke. It was evening and everyone in the ship except the Senator had fallen asleep.

Xenophilus paced around his chamber excitedly. A group of his Marines had just picked up Adora and her followers in a cheap hangar on the surface of Teral VII. Not one Marine had been killed in the process, either. What a catch: one Republican princess, one BugEyed squire, one old man whose purpose was unknown, and a pilot with a bad case of dandruff. There was only one thing that bothered him: who was the old man?

His reverie was interrupted by the chief chef. "The prisoners are on board. Brain scans confirm that the old man with them is not a BugEyed Knight."

"They must have had a full fledged knight with them at some point in time. He might have been killed when the Dynoship II was destroyed, but I don't want to take any chances. Have the Marines search the planet carefully and put them in our best silent cell to get them to talk. Put all our psychologists, the main computer, and anyone else who may help on duty to monitor their conversation and analyze it. With a thorough analysis of their thought and conversation patterns, we ought to be able to find out the secret of where the Republican Convention is being held, and where their full-fledged BugEyed Knight is if he is still alive."

The four heroes were put into the same cell. It was ten meters square and was devoid of furniture except a water fountain. "It sure is quiet in here," said the Senator.

"A strange kind of quiet," added Adora.

"It is the sound of one hand clapping," explained George peacefully.

"Can't you see what they're doing?" cried Syndrum. "This is a silent cell. It's designed to have a quiet that no one can bear for long. They put us in here together so we would talk together. After the psychologists hear us talk enough, they can figure our thought patterns to find out all our secrets!"

Strain broke out in Syndrum's face first. He was fighting a herculean inner battle to keep from scratching his itching scalp. He didn't want the sanitary patrols washing his hair for very important reasons. Finally, Adora said, "George, can't you

get us out of here?"

"No, I'm afraid not," answered George. "I can make a few people fall asleep, but I can't put as many to sleep as Sir Manfred could. If it was just the few guards outside the door, I'd be all right, but we are being watched by all the military, navigational, and psychological personnel on this ship. I can't put them all to sleep -- "

"Shhhhh!" hissed Syndrum.

The silence began to take its toll; all the heroes except George were working up a nervous frenzy. It was becoming unbearable especially with the realization that it could go on forever. "Somebody say something!" screamed Adora at last.

"We can't!" rebutted Syndrum. "Once they find the *logic* of our speech patterns..."

The Senator then decided it was time for him to act. Thus, he began the greatest filibuster in the history of the Empire.

After finishing a delicious and nutritious repast, Xenophilus checked the chronometer: it had been 247 glurps since the old man began speaking. By now the psychologists must have something, he thought. With his tentacle he touched the button on his computer terminal to contact the chief psychologist. The screen before him failed to light up. Something was wrong. He had a strange feeling that the problem didn't just lie in his control panel; his inner senses told him that the entire ship was facing difficulties though he had yet to decide what they were.

He decided to go to the psychologist's lab and see what was going on personally. When he got there, he found the old man was still going strong and all the psychologists were sound asleep. Most disturbing was the fact that most of the computer terminals were dead. "Well, Doctor?" roared Xenophilus.

The psychologists woke up. The head shrink replied, "Whaa..? Oh my goodness... What happened? That old man. What is he?"

"That's one of the things you were supposed to find out."

"That man has made no logic in the last 100 glurps!"

"He's been talking for 248."

"He what? I can't believe it!" The head psychologist rapidly punched keys in one of the still operational consoles frantically. "Sir, none of the other stations assigned on this operation reprt in."

"What happened?" roared Xenophilus. "I have not detected any mental assaults through the fourth dimension, yet you look as if a BugEyed Knight put you under his spells."

"Well, that man's speech was so boring that all our minds began to drift. I set the computer to sound an alarm as soon as it detected anything of substance in case my alertness drained. Apparently it did, although more than I can hardly believe. That man is a deadly weapon!"

Just then a weary computer technician burst into the room. "My lord Xenophilus," he gasped, "over half of the main computer's circuitry has shorted out. The psychologists have done it by feeding in too many conflicting variables in the Priority One channels. It's like you told the whole computer to derive pi and divide it by zero while bypassing all the safety cut-offs at the same time!"

"Wake up, George," said Adora softly. "Wake up."

"Yes?"

"The Senator had the power to put us to sleep. Maybe he could have dulled our keepers' senses enough to be put under your control."

"The only reason I managed to wake up was because of my scalp," explained Syndrum.

The Senator paused to get a glass of water. "How am I doing?"

"Fantastic!" exclaimed George. "Most everybody is asleep and the main computer has a nervous breakdown."

"And I was just getting started."

"I believe I can get us out of here now," continued George. "Syndrum, you know what to do. Adora, stay here with the Senator while he continues with his speech."

Using his telepathic power, George caused one of the sleeping guards to open the doorway. He and Syndrum ran to where George had determined his Bug-Eyed knife was stored and procured it. George next gave Sundrum the directions on how to get to the main air supply. He then made his way boldly to where he knew Xenophilus was now situated.

After quite a bit of walking, George turned into a corridor to find Xenophilus crouched with his plasma sword ready.

In an attempt to intimidate George, Xenophilus roared in a mocking voice, "Are *you* the one who killed the great Patrimos?"

"No, 'twas the noble Sir Manfred who accomplished that task."

"Where is he now? Why do *you* do his fighting?"

"He's dead."

"And you expect to survive doing a task that destroyed your mentor?"

This infuriated George enough to make him charge. It wasn't long before George realized he could not destroy Xenophilus in a battle of BugEyed knife versus giant plasma sword. The battle began to appear hopeless; George could not lunge without being sliced by Xenophilus' great plasma sword. As his despair began to reach its height, he remembered what he learned in the monastery. Using his fourth dimensional vision, he made a mental map of the dimothron's nervous system. George lunged, letting his knife slip out of his hand as Xenophilus parried. In a smooth motion he dove toward the dimothron's head in an apparently foolish maneuver. He was instantly grabbed by the dimothron's tentacles and pulled towards its mouth. As the tentacles pulled him, George drove his fist accurately into a vulnerable nerve point which stunned the monster. He pulled away from the tentacles, grabbed his knife, and sliced off the dimothron's head yelling triumphantly, "The Zen is mightier than the sword!"

After acquiring a shaving kit and some water from an anonymous bureaucrat's quarters, Syndrum stealthily made his way to the main air supply. A sleeping Marine provided him with a sidearm. Three days before, Syndrum had impregnated his hair with the spores of the Tthgarian brain mites. All he had to do was to wet his hair and the adhesive that held the spores to his hair would dissolve. This had been a safe course of action because Teral VII was a cold and dry planet. This was also the most inconspicuous way Syndrum thougnt he could carry the spores. He had to release the spores in the main air supply because the mites were not fatal so he had to infect nearly everyone at once to gain control of the ship. Once infected, a person remained unconscious for 157 glurps before the mites finisned that part of their life cycle.

Reaching the main air core, he handily took care of the attendants by wetting a small lock of his hair. He then proceeded to infect the entire ship and hope that George could handle Xenopnilus, who was immune. After he was done, he went to the main control rooms of tne ship and programmed all the doors to stay shut for everyone except himself, George, the Senator, and Adora. Finally, he shouted triumphantly over the main intercoms, "It is done! The ship is ours! I CAME! I SAW! I INFESTED!"

The heroes sat in the bridge with 64 glurps before the crew would awaken. They had finished quieting the Senator and opening the airlock so Treble could park in one of the shuttle bays. Adora had also knighted AC-316 to become Sir George.

"We now have the most awesome ship ever built in our hands so what do we do now?" asked Syndrum.

"Negotiate arms limitations treaties of course," replied the Senator, who was now getting ready to enjoy the revolution.

"Of all the -- "

"We have to take this ship to our base," said Adora.

"How are we going to do that?" groaned Sir George. "I failed on one point. I forgot that we don't have enough people to operate a dynoship. We might have been able to do it with the computer but the main computer is barely able to keep the oxygen supply going much less able to go into 4-space. We can't possibly do it."

"No problem," boomed Treble over the intercom. "I had Syndrum hook me up to the 4-space drive controls. Give me the coordinates of the Republican base."

"Can you also handle some of the weaponry?" asked George.

"I suppose after some extensive computer programming I could. Why? I thought you were going to get a crew to do that."

"We might not have time to do that. I detect Minthros' Dynoship I coming with a large escort of battle cruisers. They would find the base before we are ready to fight if we go there now. It might be best that we set the self destruct and abandon this ship instead of risking the base."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Senator. "Go to your base immediately and demand an escort of your own. It doesn't matter if you don't have troops that are capable of performing their jobs as long as they look like they can. That is, if you take my advice and negotiate an arms limitations treaty. The United States has followed this kind of policy for years with great success."

"It looks as if we have no choice but to accept your advice," said Adora miserably. "I hope it works. Do as he says, Treble."

The Dynoship II stationed itself in a high orbit around Ergo III, the location of the Republican base. An escort of the entire Republican fleet surrounded the dynoship. General Zark and a few other Republican dignitaries barely had enough time to get aboard the Dynoship II before Minthros' fleet came into view. At first sight it appeared that the Republicans outnumbered the Imperials, but looks can be deceiving; the Republican dynoship didn't have a trained crew to work its weapons.

General Zark looked over the situation. "Why did you have to bring this ship here when Minthros was on your tail? Why couldn't you shake them first?"

"We can hardly operate this thing at all," replied Syndrum. "Much less shake them. This thing leaves a trail into 4-space that you wouldn't believe. It's just that this is the first time anyone has tried to follow a dynoship in a long time."

"Let's see," continued Zark. "I have brought enough men to operate one of the major weapons systems. I suppose the BugEyed Knight here can make a couple of the crews below work for us," he said while looking at the Senator.

"He's not the knight," corrected Adora. "He is," said she as she pointed at Sir George.

"That can't be Sir Manfred," said Zark.

"I'm not," agreed Sir George. "I'm Sir George, recently knighted for my victory over Xenophilus and former squire of the late Sir Manfred. The man we have brought with us is a U. S. Senator and is in charge of this operation."

The Great Lord Minthros, Imperial battle commander of the Galactic Empire of Jom Qualrian, surveyed his position. Xenophilus' last report said that the group aboard his vessel consisted of Adora, a BugEyed squire of limited powers, a smuggler with a bad case of itching and flaking, and something called a U. S. Senator. Somehow they had managed to take over a Dynoship. The question was whether they had managed to brainwash the crew or replace it. If they did, it would be dangerous to attack. If not he could lead a landslide victory against the Republicans. As it was, the best thing to do would be to stall for time.

To ask for help now would be a show of weakness that he refused to submit to. If only he could make contact with the rest of the Empire without losing face and be able to stall. He decided to try negotiating with the Republicans; with his political analysts and psychologists, he could easily destroy them with mere words, or at least delay them.

He activated his screen and hailed the other dynoship. He was greeted by a fairly old man (the Senator?). The man agreed to negotiate (Good, the delay shall help); however, he demanded that the negotiations be heard by everyone on both sides in all ships and also transmitted throughout the Empire (Great, he could contact the Emperor without actually asking for help and also have a shot at debrainwashing the crew members of the other ship). Minthros promptly agreed to the conditions.

Thus began the Peripheral Explanations of the Power or Perishing of the Extraterrestrial Republic talks.

"Wake up, good knight," whispered Adora into Sir George's ear.

"How long has the Senator been talking?" asked the Knight.

"Quite long. Look at the main screen."

George got up and looked at the screen. All of the Imperial vessels except the dynoship were gone. All of the Republican vessels were gone too, for that matter.

"They've joined hands in a group effort to save the snail darter from extinction," beamed Syndrum placidly.

The Senator was delivering a fiery speech to the other ship on how Imperial troops were paid so little that they had to go on food stamps.

Sir George focused his awareness at the other dynoship. Hundreds of gunners and force field operators were leaving their posts to join a union due to the Senator's speech. "Fire nuclear warheads," commanded Sir George.

The one Republican weapons crew fired a volley of fusion bombs. The Dynoship I had no crews operating the lasers or deflector screens so the bombs destroyed the Dynoship I of Minthros, ending the great game of basebomb in a spectacular blast.

Thus, the Empire *Strikes* Out.

The Scripture says that it is better to be a live jackal than a dead lion. Well, is it?

SURVIVAL or: "'Repent, Pilgrim,' cried the Kodac man"

They made survival their whole pantheon --
bizarre fringe of the species' range of tactics;
species-survival did not concern *these* folk,
but mere survival of their own mere selves.
A useful trait, to be sure, selfishness
*can* strongly work -- unwilling -- for the all,
self-interest all unknowing be unselfish...
But these, now, these saw signs in daily news
and built strong-holes of reinforced concrete,
square grey provisioned spider-traps to live in,
well stocked with food, and lots of ammunition
with which to ward off the famine-panic'd hordes
they knew would come, from suburbs of Ground Zero.

When Hell came down from heaven
they stood armed and vindicated,
drew their children to the costly warrens
and shot the importune outsiders
who -- guilty of having been less rich --
were therefore unprepared. It was all just
and just as they had seen it: the terrain
shielded their mined and barred survival cellars
from the worst effects of blast.

And they survived it,
survived to raise their children in community
of those who had correctly seen the future,
had banded here together in the mountains.
They survived.
The money they had paid *had* bought their lives,
the cell was self-sufficient.

Their grandchildren
began to doubt the story, as they grew,
and secret -- and subversive -- works were sung
composed and sung (there was no ink nor paper,
such commodities deliberately discarded
as offering no sound survival value)
suggesting that the holocaust was fiction,
that there had been no bomb, no Hell, no skies
sheeted in fire,
no poison in the rain. But the Survivors --
the once-children now Elders -- heard the songs,
these insecure projections of how different
the land Outside might be, if it ne'er happened,
if they were niding from a thriving world;
knew these songs for false, and disciplined
the singers of them. It was only just,
and just as they'd been raised ard taught.

Time came
the colony's resources were run out,
projections made on great-grandparent's data
suggested that the hills were clean again,
washed clean, and safe from unseen lethal dusts.

They went Outside.

And what they found
was confirmation of the nightmare fears
of great-grandparents -- though the world was green
and terrifying in its splendid beauty
to poor pale unsexed things raised underground,
born to six flat grey concrete surfaces,
imprisoned from before birth, for survival --
the stronghold hills were full of danger still,
wise predators whose dead great-grandparents
their own had not successfully destroyed,
strong sun-brown hunters of those wild slopes,
few of whom bothered actively to hunt
the maze-bred hole-raised unadaptive things
that stumbled from their all-too-safe stone burrows
to die -- some within hours -- of endemic
once-harmless and mutated microbe flora,
the new strains as lethal to isolates
as harmless to those who'd been raised Outside.
The hunters Outside let them die in peace;
feeling no anger, but amused contempt
for these who thought to be new founders all
of a new breed of men -- less human now
for their imprisonment, than those mutants
who, forced to adapt or die, had *proved* human,
exhibited humanity in their skill
and will not to go under.

It was precisely those plain common folk
who lacked funds or conviction to dig in
who had prevailed. Though many died
more than a few lived, though adversity
much more trying than the self-protection
of those who thought to spare themselves that burden.
Humanity maintained
itself as population
much-thinned but still quite virile, and adaptive,
so that, though the "survivalists"
had thought to go to ground and thus live on
to spread their seed to future generations,
it was only
those left Outside
who survived.

-- Susan R. Matthews